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Understanding Jalul through Ceramics

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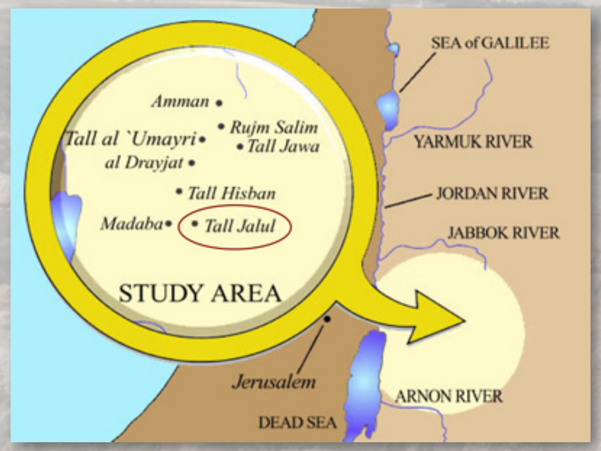
Abstract

Three-dimensional ceramic scans provide many advantages for research and publication. These 3-D scans can be shared for examination purposes with distant scholars who do not have access to the physical sherd. Using a special software, we can convert the 3-D color scans into 2-D computer drawings that represent the cross section of the pottery sherd, which is the standard way in which pottery sherds are presented in publication. Using the program, features that may be overlooked with the naked eye are highlighted, allowing for a more accurate and insightful analysis. My presentation will explain how ceramic analysis has aided our overall understanding of the ancient Iron Age site of Jalul, Jordan thus far.

Location of Tall Jalul



Methodology

Step 1:
Numerous pottery sherds from Field D of the archaeological site were scanned using a 3-D scanning program, Meshlab.

Step 2:
After the process of 3-D scanning, the scanned files are opened in a drawing program. Depending on how accurate the scan is, it is either edited or put through the scanning process again.

Step 3:
After the program is edited in the drawing program, the 2-D computer drawings are ready for presentation in publications.

Findings

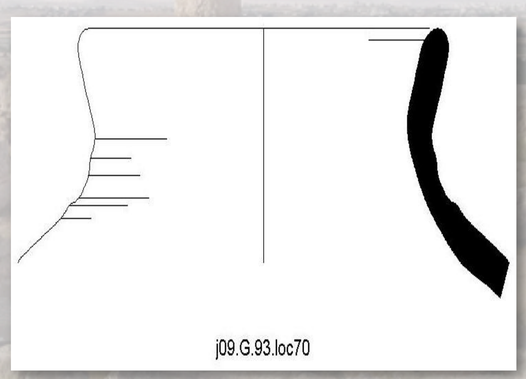
What might ceramic analysis reveal about the ethnic identities of the people of Jalul?

Based on a compilation of research including ceramic analysis, the Israelites, Moabites, and Ammonites have all been identified as previous inhabitants of the ancient site of Jalul. Differences in pottery, pottery typology, biblical text, and the Mesha inscription have all been useful resources for understanding Jalul.

Ceramic Analysis

Israelites

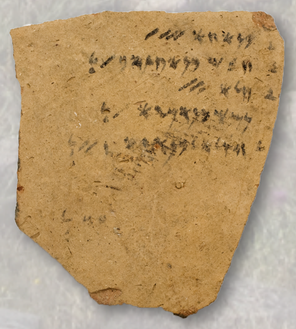
(13th to mid-9th century BC)



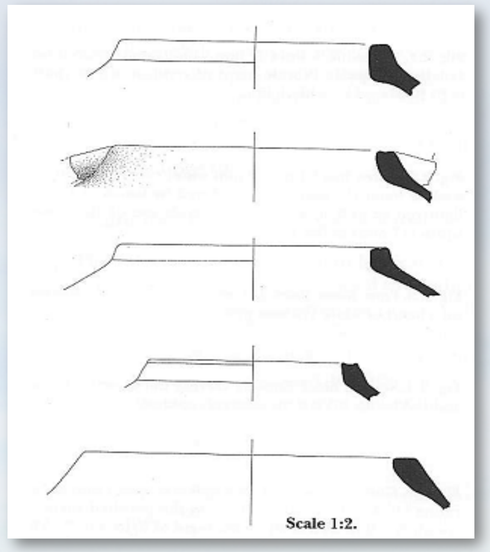
Israelite collared-rim jar

Moabite vs. Ammonite

Inscriptions on pottery reveal identity by the spelling, names, and overall writing style.



Ammonite pottery with inscription
(end of 8th to mid-6th century BC)



Moabite cooking pots
(mid-9th to end of 8th century BC)

Conclusion

It is important to understand that ceramic analysis is just one component of research for the ancient site. Along with other research methods, ceramic analysis can reveal a lot more than ethnic identifications of a site. For future research, I hope to use ceramic analysis to investigate the following questions:

1) What can we learn about local food ways?
2) What do these sherds teach us about pottery making?
3) What might they reveal about long-distance trade?

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